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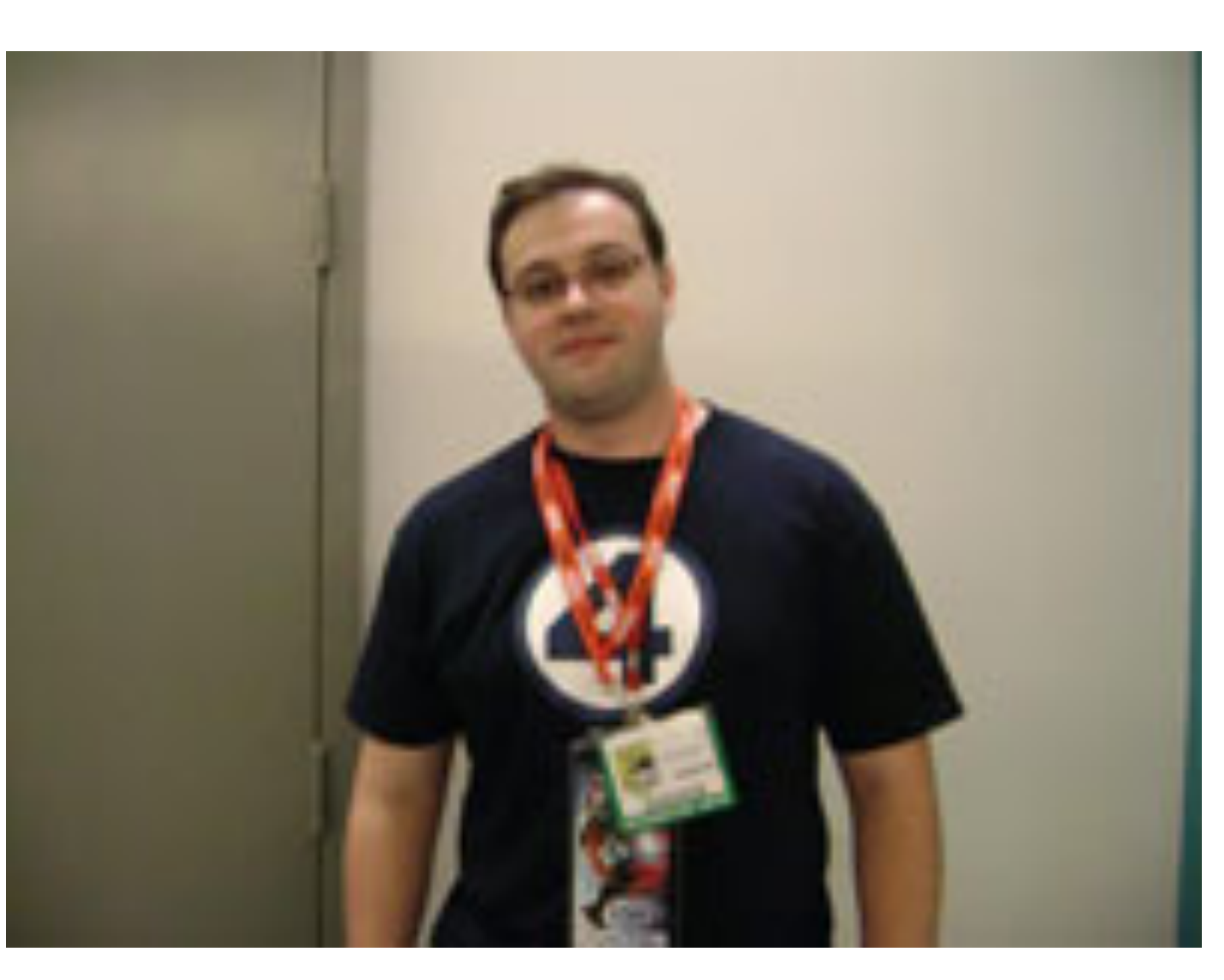
SDCC2010: Interview with Marvel Animation's Josh Fine and Chris Yost

By **Jeffrey Harris** - July 30, 2010 818 0

While at the San Diego Comic-Con, Toonzone got the chance to catch up with Marvel Animation's Josh Fine and Chris Yost to talk about the latest from the animation department of the House of Ideas. Josh Fine is Marvel Animation's Director of Development and the supervising producer for Wolverine and the X-Men, Planet Hulk, *and the upcoming* Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes. *Comic and cartoon writer Chris Yost has been a staple of Marvel Animation for the past several years and his credits include* Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Fantastic Four: World's Greatest Heroes, Wolverine and the X-Men, *and is currently story editor for* Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes. *Here is what went down:*



TOONZONE NEWS: What are we going to be seeing at the *Avengers* animated series panel?

JOSH FINE: Lots of good stuff. I think fans are going to be stoked. We're going to show two episodes of the beginning of the *Avengers* series that really highlight how the team comes together. I don't want to spoil too much before the show.

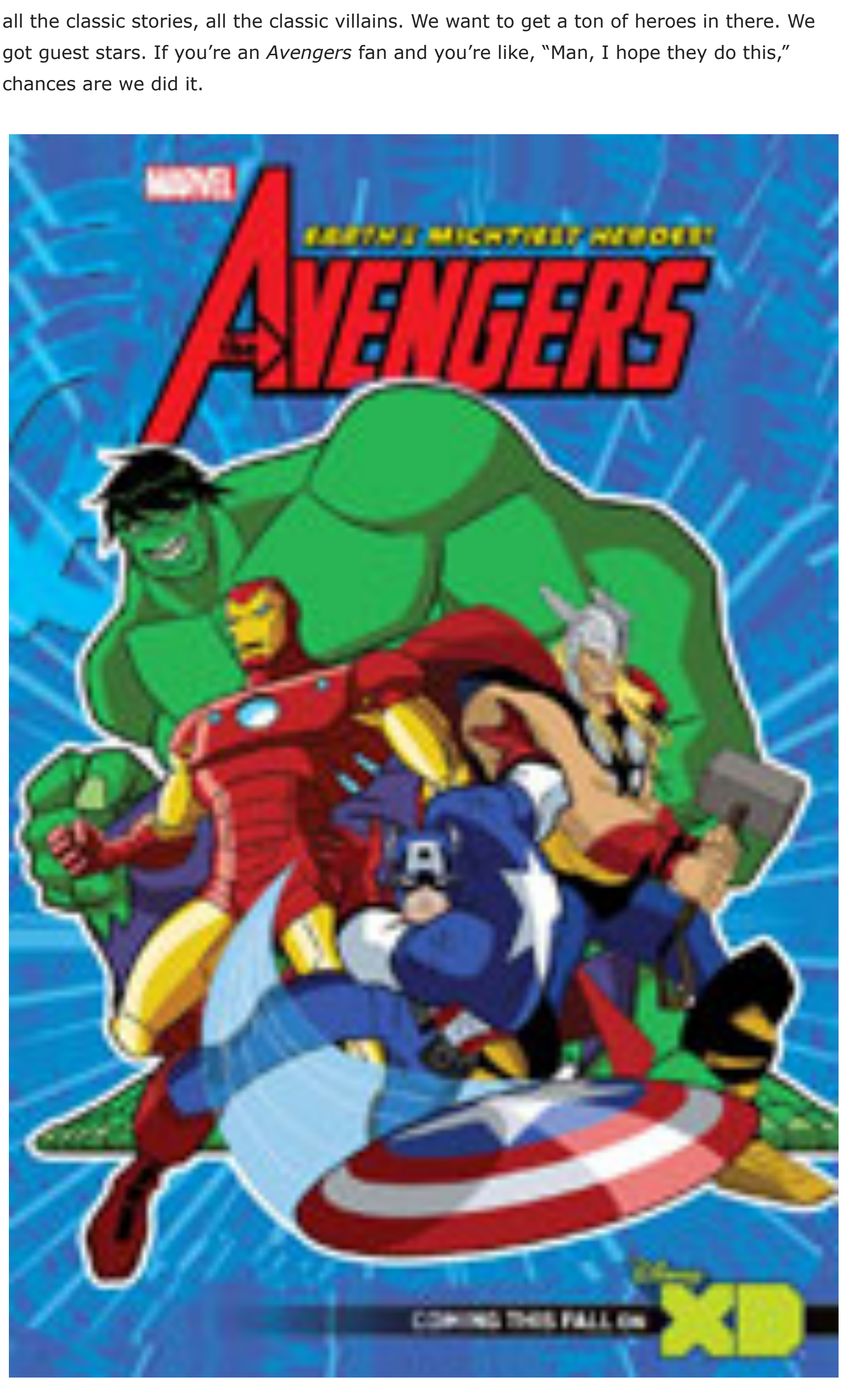
TZN: For the both of you, what was your goal in doing this *Avengers* series? This is not the first Avengers animated series.

JOSH FINE: It's not, but it's the only one that will really count in fans' hearts.

CHRIS YOST: It's the only one in history you're going to remember. Our goal was to deliver the show that the fans have been asking for. We wanted to deliver something that people of all ages can enjoy: kids, fanboys, fans, old people…everybody. I think the adults can watch the show and say, "That's a great show." I think if you're a comic fan you're going to get so much out of it. We connect it fully with everything we can think of. We really wanted this show to sing on every level, and we're pretty proud of it.

TZN: The trailer looks like there are a ton of characters in it. Chris, as a writer, how do you like getting this buffet of the Marvel Universe to work with?

CHRIS YOST: It's the best thing in the world. *Wolverine and the X-Men*, the X-Men universe, where I played, had a ton of characters there, so I'm used to a big cast with a ton of characters. But with *Avengers*, it was new and exciting. It was great. We want to do all the classic stories, all the classic villains. We want to get a ton of heroes in there. We got guest stars. If you're an *Avengers* fan and you're like, "Man, I hope they do this," chances are we did it.



TZN: Josh, what's the limit of the Marvel Universe characters you see in this show? I think we've heard maybe 52 episodes, so there are definitely a lot of opportunities here.

JOSH FINE: Lots. I will say lots. We cover a lot of ground in 52 episodes. We obviously focus on a core group of Avengers. That group changes, and guys come and go over the course of the series which has always been one of the most fun parts about the Avengers as a team I think. But we try to focus on character stories on those guys. Outside of that, we have hero cameos from all over the Marvel Universe, specifically the Avengers universe. We have hundreds of villains.

TZN: Possibilities of any merry mutants or a fantastic family?

JOSH FINE: Possibilities. I won't confirm any rumors at this time.

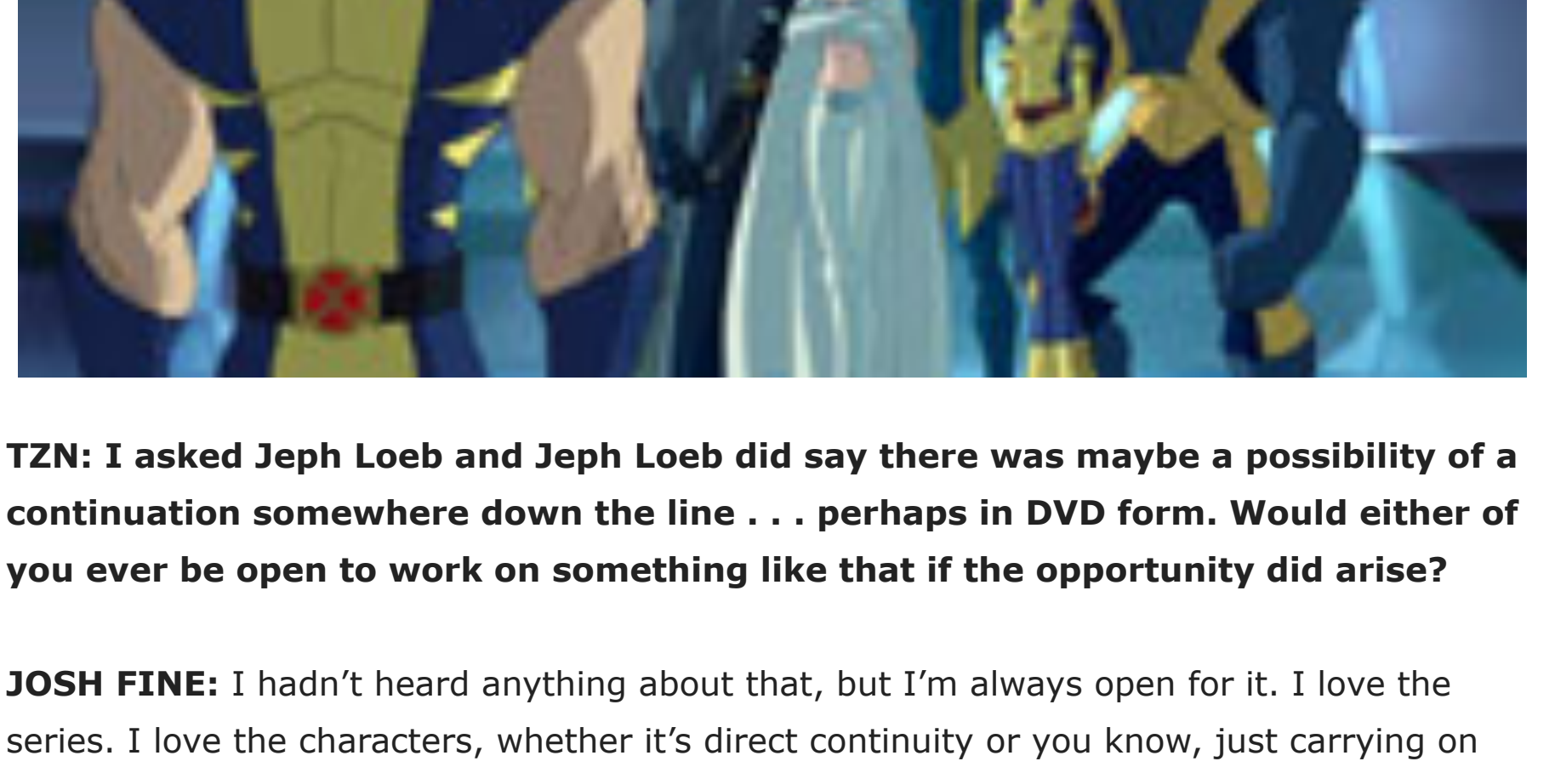
TZN: What was the situation that kept *Wolverine and the X-Men* from getting a second season?

JOSH FINE: I can't say too much outside of what's already been kind of said about why the series won't be returning unfortunately. But I will say that for fans of the series, the complete season Blu-ray is coming out this October 12. It's going to be a three-disc set, the first time the series has ever been available in high definition.

TZN: And complete.

JOSH FINE: The complete series from beginning to end and lots of bonus features and stuff. So for everybody that loved the series and would've loved to see it continue, I hope you check it out because it really is a great collection. Show your support, because I mean everybody that worked on that series loved it. There's nothing that we would want more in the world than to see it continue, but unfortunately circumstances prevented it from happening.

CHRIS YOST: I heard they said if Facebook had a page that's like 100 million and one they would've done more. But it's only like a million and they're like, "Eh, it's not worth it."



TZN: I asked Jeph Loeb and Jeph Loeb did say there was maybe a possibility of a continuation somewhere down the line . . . perhaps in DVD form. Would either of you ever be open to work on something like that if the opportunity did arise?

JOSH FINE: I hadn't heard anything about that, but I'm always open for it. I love the series. I love the characters, whether it's direct continuity or you know, just carrying on the flavor of what we did in the series. I would love to work with more X-Men.

CHRIS YOST: Yeah, pretty much anything Marvel that they'd be like, "Hey, do you want to write an *X-Men* DVD?" And I'll be like "Yeh . . . nah. Not really." I mean, yeah really. It was a great experience working on the show. It was an amazing crew, amazing people, amazing characters. Yeah, I'd definitely be in it. I'm sure Greg Johnson feels the same way —

JOSH FINE: And Boyd [Kirkland] too.

CHRIS YOST: And Boyd. Like everybody. It was really, truly like a passion project. I love it.

TZN: I've really enjoyed the DTV Marvel/Lionsgate releases. There will be another one released early next year with *Thor: Tales of Asgard*. Will this be the last of Marvel/Lionsgate DTV movies or might we see more of them down the line?

JOSH FINE: I don't know if it will be the last or not. It is the last one we have planned at the moment. It is kind of the culmination of everything that we've worked on. *Thor: Tales of Asgard* will be out some time in 2011 for fans to pick up. And it's a really great movie. I cannot say enough good stuff about it.

TZN: With the Marvel/Madhouse anime projects, last year at Comic-con, Warren Ellis mentioned working on other than anime projects for *Wolverine* and *Iron Man*. He was also working on shows for Blade and X-Men.

JOSH FINE: Yes. *Blade*, *X-Men*, *Wolverine*, and *Iron Man* are the four. We are screening an episode of *Iron Man* tonight at 8:15. It will be the first chance for fans to finally see what all this anime craziness is all about.

TZN: So all the other shows are still in the works right now?

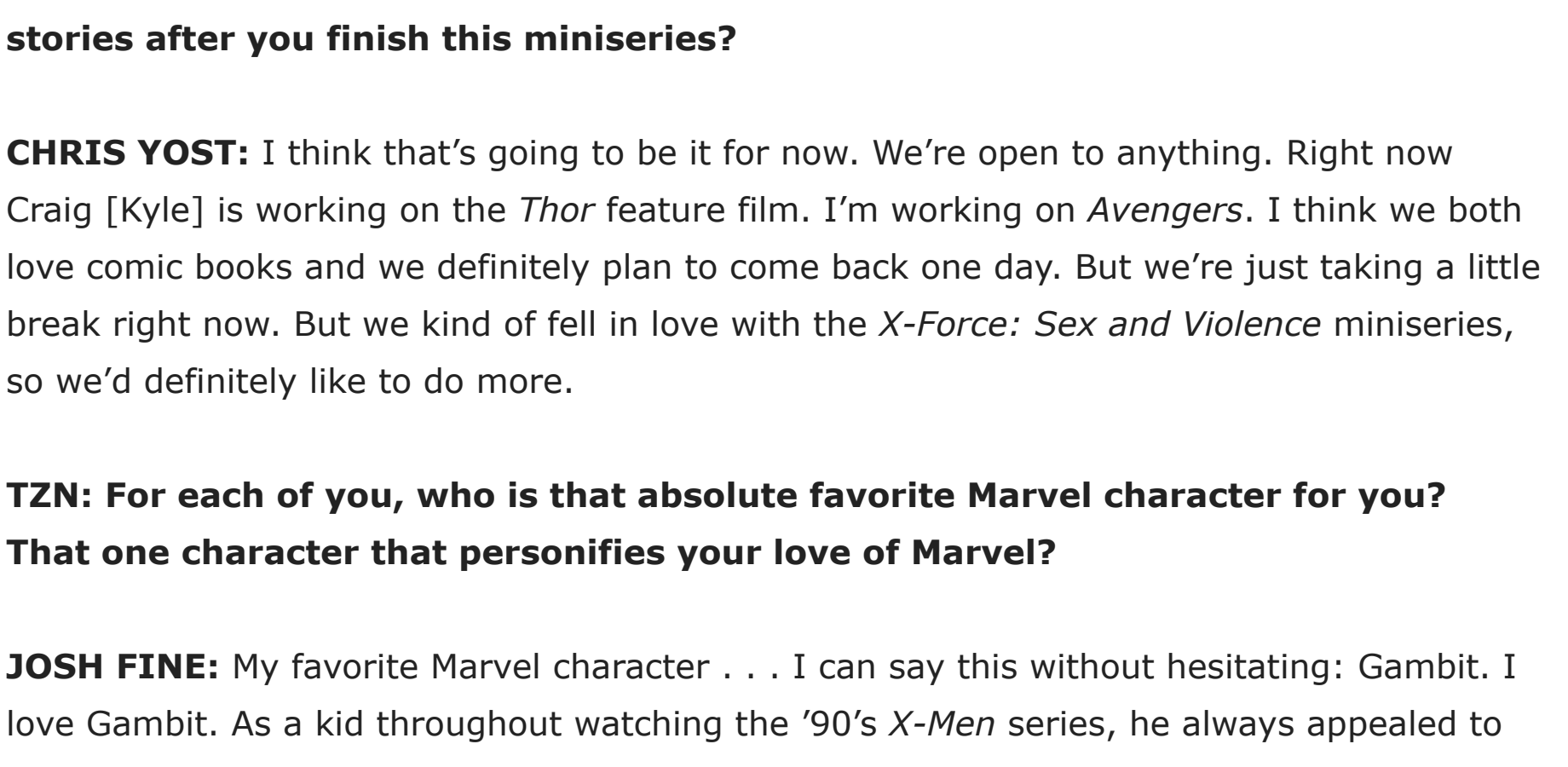
JOSH FINE: Yes. They are all in various stages of completion right now, and I think you'll continue to see more and more as they get closer to finishing.

TZN: For Chris, in your *Avengers* series, how do you see the relationship with Tony Stark/Iron Man and Steve Rogers/Captain America?

CHRIS YOST: You know, it's a good relationship and it's one we definitely explore. I mean these two guys, they're almost like from opposite ends of the spectrum. You've got a man literally from the past dealing with a guy who always considers himself a futurist, always looking for more or always looking for what's next. And situations are going to arise where they butt heads, so it's definitely some drama that we play with.

TZN: We will also be seeing the Hulk as a member of a team. Normally we see the Hulk as a rampaging force. In the *Ultimate Avengers* animated movies, the Hulk was set opposite the Avengers. So what was it like putting Hulk in this team setting?

CHRIS YOST: It's great because I mean, what it does . . . and the comics did it first, it's conflict. It's like the Hulk is not going to get along very easily with these guys. There's a point where things are going to happen. You put Hulk and Thor in a room and Hulk is particularly grouchy. You know Thor may not stand for it. You put Iron Man and Hulk together and things could go south. It's a touchy situation and it's one that we kind of face head on. So we definitely know that the Hulk thing there is going to have issues and we deal with them.



TZN: I was a big fan of your run on the *X-Force* comics with Craig Kyle. I'm really enjoying the *X-Force: Sex and Violence* miniseries you are working on with Craig Kyle and Gabrielle Del'Otto. Do you have any more plans for some other *X-Force* stories after you finish this miniseries?

CHRIS YOST: I think that's going to be it for now. We're open to anything. Right now Craig [Kyle] is working on the *Thor* feature film. I'm working on *Avengers*. I think we both love comic books and we definitely plan to come back one day. But we're just taking a little break right now. But we kind of fell in love with the *X-Force: Sex and Violence* miniseries, so we'd definitely like to do more.

TZN: For each of you, who is that absolute favorite Marvel character for you? That one character that personifies your love of Marvel?

JOSH FINE: My favorite Marvel character . . . I can say this without hesitating: Gambit. I love Gambit. As a kid throughout watching the '90's *X-Men* series, he always appealed to me. I can't explain it. I just think that the Cajun thief is the coolest guy ever.

CHRIS YOST: For me it's Spider-Man. Spider-Man has always been my favorite from day one, like back when I was a little kid to this day. He's got an amazing visual. He's fun. He's always on the move, always making a joke, and I think it's just like a good lesson, his particular philosophy about why he's being a hero and what he's doing. I just really responded to it. I love Spider-Man.

TZN: Do you feel the *Avengers* series will knock *Justice League* and *Justice League Unlimited* out of the park?

JOSH FINE: I don't want to comment on the competition at all. That's certainly a series that fans hold in high esteem, but I think this one will as well. It's the essence of Marvel. We just try to tell really great character stories and the biggest action packed stories that we can. I think fans will remember this series for a long time.

Toonzone would like to thank Lionsgate, Chris Yost, and Josh Fine for graciously taking the time to speak with us.

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